

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-08 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 SAM-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 MCT-01 /092 W

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R 121405Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6213

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

USCINCEUR

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 KUWAIT 4358

USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, KU

SUBJ: PALESTINIAN THREAT TO KUWAIT

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REF: KUWAIT 4246 (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY. EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT RECENT GOK MOVES TO SQUELCH PUBLIC DEBATE ON ARAB ISSUES, INCLUDING PALESTINIAN PROBLEM, WERE MOTIVATED PARTLY BY DESIRE TO FORESTALL ANY POTENTIAL PALESTINIAN TROUBLEMAKING IN KUWAIT, RATHER THAN BY CURRENT POLITICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN GOK LEADERS AND LARGE, HETEROGENEOUS PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY HERE. THESE MOVES HAVE NOT, OF COURSE, INSULATED KUWAIT FROM PRESSURES OR VIOLENCE BY PALESTINIANS UNHAPPY WITH GOK'S FAILURE TO TAKE THEIR SIDE ON ISSUE OF SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON, BUT GOK MOVES MAY DECREASE LIKELIHOOD OF DISTURBANCES. WE NOTE ALSO THAT PLO LEADERS STILL APPEAR CHUMMY WITH GOK. THERE ARE RISKS THAT PALESTINIAN RADICALS IN KUWAIT MAY GO UNDERGROUND (WITH OR WITHOUT THEIR KUWAITI COUNTERPARTS) AND ENGAGE IN VIOLENCE, BUT THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES WHICH GOK PROVIDES BOTH TO RESIDENT PALESTINIANS AND TO THE REGIONAL PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT SHOULD CONTINUE TO DISCOURAGE PALESTINIAN INTEREST IN DESTABILIZING KUWAIT.
END SUMMARY.

2. ISSUE 33 OF CURRENT FOREIGN RELATIONS, DATED SEPT 2, CONTAINS ARTICLE ENTITLED "KUWAIT ABANDONS DEMOCRATIC TRADITIONS" WHICH WE BELIEVE OVERSTATES SOMEWHAT BOTH THE "DIFFERENCES" BETWEEN GOK AND THE PALESTINIAN MINORITY HERE AND THE INCREASE IN POTENTIAL FOR PALESTINIAN VIOLENCE IN KUWAIT. WE BELIEVE THAT, TO THE EXTENT AMIR'S MOVES WERE MOTIVATED BY GOAL OF FORESTALLING ANY POTENTIAL PALESTINIAN TROUBLEMAKING, GOK WAS CONCERNED THAT PUBLIC DEBATE IN KUWAIT, ESPECIALLY ON THE SYRIAN-PLO SPLIT AND INCREASINGLY ON ISSUES PROMOTED BY LIBYA, WOULD EXCITE RESIDENT PALESTINIANS AND WOULD POLARIZE KUWAITI OPINION ON PALESTINIAN ISSUES.

3. WE HAVE NOT YET CONCLUDED, HOWEVER, THAT AMIR ACTED OUT OF CONCERN WITH ANY CURRENT POLITICAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN KUWAITI "RULERS AND KUWAIT'S LARGE PALESTINIAN MINORITY" (PARA 3, CFR ARTICLE). THERE ARE THREE POINTS TO BE MADE HERE:

A. THE PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY IN KUWAIT IS NOT A MONOLITH,
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AND ITS POTENTIAL FOR LAWLESSNESS REALLY HAS VERY LITTLE TO DO WITH THE SIZE OF THE COMMUNITY. OVER 70 PERCENT OF RESIDENT PALESTINIANS ARE ESTIMATED TO BE EMPLOYED BY THE GOK. PRIVATE BUSINESSMEN AND MERCHANTS MAKE UP THE BULK OF THE REST, WITH THE PERCENTAGE OF RADICALS AMONG THEM HIGHEST AMONG THE YOUNG AND THE INTELLECTUALS. FIVE PALESTINIAN TERRORISTS (OR FIVE IRAQIS OR FIVE AMERICANS) COULD, IF DETERMINED TO DO SO, INFILCT SERIOUS

DAMAGE IN KUWAIT AND THEY NEED NOT BE REPRESENTATIVE OF ANY POLITICAL GROUP BEYOND THEMSELVES. KUWAITI OFFICIALS AND INSTALLATIONS ARE NO MORE AND NO LESS VULNERABLE TODAY THAN A YEAR AGO.

B. NOR HAVE THE KUWAITIS MEASURABLY INCREASED INTERNAL SECURITY BY SHUTTING DOWN THE POLITICAL AND MEDIA INSTITUTIONS WHICH MADE KUWAIT VULNERABLE AS A SITE FOR THE PLAYING OUT OF INTER-ARAB RIVALRIES. BUT THE GOK HAS PROBABLY REDUCED THE POSSIBILITIES OF PALESTINIAN, LIBYAN, IRAQI, SYRIAN, EGYPTIAN, SAUDI AND PERHAPS OTHER GOVERNMENTS' REPRESENTATIVES FINANCING POLITICAL GROUPS OR NEWSPAPERS FRIENDLY TO THEM, AS WELL AS THE CHANCE OF DISTURBANCES GROWING OUT OF SUCH ACTIVITIES OR OTHER MANIPULATION OF KUWAIT'S DESTINY.

C. KUWAIT'S RELATIONS WITH ITS PALESTINIAN COMMUNITY HAVE BEEN MANAGED DELICATELY AND CAREFULLY AND, AS LONG AS THE GENERAL PATTERN OF PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE PLO WAS FOLLOWED BY MOST ARAB COUNTRIES, KUWAIT ENCOUNTERED NO REAL PROBLEMS WITH ITS LARGE PALESTINIAN MINORITY. BUT THEN SYRIA TOOK HOSTILE ACTION AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS; JORDAN SECONDED IT; AND SAUDI ARABIA REMAINED, IN THE MAIN, BEHIND SYRIA. DESPITE HEAVY PRESSURE FROM THE KUWAITI PRESS AND THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, THE GOK REFUSED TO TAKE A FORMAL POSITION SUPPORTING THE PLO AGAINST SYRIA, A REFUSAL WHICH WAS WIDELY INTERPRETED AS SANCTIONING SYRIAN ACTIONS. THIS BECAME AN EMBARRASSMENT TO KUWAIT AND WAS BEGINNING TO COMPLICATE SOMEWHAT ITS RELATIONS WITH ITS LARGE ARAB NEIGHBORS. WAS THERE MEANINGFUL "DIFFERENCE" BETWEEN THE GOK AND KUWAIT'S LARGE PALESTINIAN MINORITY? WHILE POLITICAL ELEMENTS AMONG KUWAIT'S LARGE PALESTINIAN MINORITY WOULD HAVE PREFERRED GOK TO TAKE

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AN OPEN STAND AGAINST SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN LEBANON, THE GOK'S CAREFUL AVOIDANCE OF PARTISAN STATEMENTS ON ANY SIDE OF THAT COMPLEX DISPUTE, AND THE VERY REAL BENEFITS KUWAIT AFFORDS TO PALESTINIANS OF MANY POLITICAL COLORATIONS, APPARENTLY HAS SO FAR RENDERED THIS POLICY "DIFFERENCE" TOLERABLE TO PALESTINIAN LEADERS. SIGNIFICANTLY, PLO AND OTHER PALESTINIAN LEADERS HAVE CONTINUED TO VISIT THE COUNTRY, TO CONSULT WITH TOP GOK MINISTERS, AND TO GO AWAY APPARENTLY SATISFIED.

4. ADDITIONAL POINT MADE IN SAME PARAGRAPH OF CFR IS THAT "ANY (PALESTINIAN) TROUBLEMAKER WILL BE SUMMARILY DEALT WITH BY EXPULSION." IN FACT, THIS HAS BEEN THE GOK PRACTICE FOR YEARS; THE KUWAITIS GET AWAY WITH IT BECAUSE KUWAIT OFFERS OTHER POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS TO THE

PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT WHICH OUTWEIGH POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES
TO BE GAINED FROM THEIR MAKING TROUBLE HERE.

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AMEMBASSY TUNIS

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 KUWAIT 4358

USCINCEUR FOR POLAD

5. REGARDING PARA 4 OF ARTICLE, WE AGREE THAT "SEEDS

OF INSTABILITY" COULD BE EMBEDDED IN AMIR'S ACTIONS,
SINCE THERE IS RISK THAT BOTH KUWAITI AND PALESTINIAN

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LEFTISTS WILL GO UNDERGROUND. AS WE SEE IT, HOWEVER,
THE GOK CAN AND WILL CONTINUE TO FURNISH PALESTINIAN
MOVEMENT SUBSTANTIAL ADVANTAGES (FINANCIAL SUPPORT,
SAFEHAVEN, POLITICAL SUPPORT IN ARAB WORLD, AND EVEN SOME
JOBS IN KUWAIT) WHICH WILL CONTINUE TO DAMP DOWN ANY
PALESTINIAN INTEREST IN DESTABILIZING KUWAIT. WE ALSO
AGREE WITH ARTICLE TO EFFECT THAT PALESTINIANS' PERCEPTIONS
OF NET ADVANTAGE OF THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH KUWAIT WOULD
CHANGE IF GOK BEGAN AN "OVERALL CRACKDOWN." BUT WE DO
NOT THINK BROAD CRACKDOWN WILL COME IN ABSENCE OF MAJOR
PALESTINIAN PROVOCATION, SINCE GOK ALSO RECOGNIZES RISK
INVOLVED. RATHER, THERE ARE RECENT INDICATIONS THAT GOK
MAY USE "CARROT" ON RESIDENT PALESTINIANS--RECENT NEWS
REPORTS INDICATE GOK MAY BE CONSIDERING INTERNAL POLICY
CHANGES WHICH WOULD INCREASE SALARIES OF ALIEN RESIDENTS,
GRANT NATIONALITY TO MORE OF THEM THAN IN THE PAST, AND
PERHAPS IMPROVE THEIR ACCESS TO BENEFITS OF KUWAITI WELFARE
STATE.

6. IN NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE ARTICLE DATELINED
WASHINGTON SEPT 1, ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS "SPECIALIZING
IN ARAB AFFAIRS" ARE REPORTED AS HAVING CONVEYED IDEAS
SIMILAR TO SOME OF THOSE IN CFR ARTICLES. IMPRESSION GIVEN
OF URGENT KUWAITI NEED TO "CONTROL THE LARGE PALESTINIAN
COMMUNITY," ABOUT TO BE SWELLED BY "NEW WAVE OF REFUGEES,"
EVEN THOUGH KUWAITI-PALESTINIAN RELATIONS "EXACERBATED"
RECENTLY AND "GROWING NUMBER OF KUWAITIS ARE VOICING
SUPPORT FOR RADICAL PALESTINIAN CAUSES." AGAIN, EMBASSY
BELIEVES THAT, IF DEPARTMENT OR OTHER SPOKESMEN WERE
QUOTED ACCURATELY, THIS IS OVERSTATEMENT BOTH OF DIFFERENCES
BETWEEN GOK AND RESIDENT PALESTINIANS AND OF INCREASE IN
THREAT OF PALESTINIAN UNREST HERE. OBVIOUSLY, GIVEN AN
APPROPRIATE SET OF OCCURRENCES OR CIRCUMSTANCES, THINGS
COULD CHANGE. IN SUCH A CASE, GOK WOULD PRESUMABLY BE
SOMEWHAT BETTER PREPARED TO REACT, AS RESULT OF PREVENTIVE
ACTIONS TAKEN BY RECENT DECREES.

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